



## Utility Scam Targets Small Businesses

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**Media Contact:** Jerad Albracht, 608-224-5007  
Jim Dick, Communications Director, 608-224-5020

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has received reports about recent utility scam attempts against small businesses in the state. DATCP urges Wisconsin residents and businesses to be on guard for threatening, unexpected phone calls regarding their utility accounts.

In this operation, scammers call businesses and residents and falsely claim to represent the local utility company. They threaten account holders with a cancellation of services if an immediate payment is not made. If you receive a similar call, hang up and contact your service provider directly to inquire.

Over the past week, Xcel Energy business customers in the La Crosse area have been targeted in this scam – but these fraudulent operations are not limited to geographic area or the types of accounts held.

Avoid being tricked in a utility scam by remembering the following:

- Utility companies will contact you by mail if your account is overdue and your services are at risk of being terminated.
- If a caller demands a utility payment by prepaid debit card or wire transfer, it is a scam.
- Scammers can manipulate your caller ID display to show the local utility company's name or number when they call.
- If you are unsure of the status of your account, contact your service provider using the number listed on your recent gas or electric bill.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <http://datcp.wisconsin.gov>, send an e-mail to [datcp@datcp.wisconsin.gov](mailto:datcp@datcp.wisconsin.gov) or call the Consumer Information Hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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